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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/688,303	10/15/2003	Kentaro Nagoshi	SIW-067	9456
959	7590	05/18/2006	EXAMINER	
LAHIVE & COCKFIELD 28 STATE STREET BOSTON, MA 02109			ALEJANDRO, RAYMOND	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			1745	

DATE MAILED: 05/18/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/688,303

Applicant(s)

NAGOSHI ET AL.

Examiner

Raymond Alejandro

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 11 May 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-15 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 3,4 and 7-15 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,2,5 and 6 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 15 October 2003 is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 10/15/03.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Election/Restrictions

1. Applicant's election of Group I and Species 11 (claims 1-2 and 5-6) in the reply filed on 05/11/06 is acknowledged. Because applicant did not distinctly and specifically point out the supposed errors in the restriction requirement, the election has been treated as an election without traverse (MPEP § 818.03(a)).

Priority

2. Acknowledgment is made of applicant's claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. 119(a)-(d). Receipt is acknowledged of papers submitted under 35 U.S.C. 119(a)-(d), which papers have been placed of record in the file.

Information Disclosure Statement

3. The information disclosure statement (IDS) submitted on 10/15/03 was considered by the examiner.

Drawings

4. The drawings are objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(5) because they do not include the following reference sign(s) mentioned in the description: 110 in Figure 11 (*Description of Figure 11 on page 23 makes reference to reference sign 11*). Corrected drawing sheets in compliance with 37 CFR 1.121(d) are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. Any amended replacement drawing sheet should include all of the figures appearing on the immediate prior version of the sheet, even if only one figure is being amended. Each drawing sheet submitted after the filing date of an application must be labeled in

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the top margin as either "Replacement Sheet" or "New Sheet" pursuant to 37 CFR 1.121(d). If the changes are not accepted by the examiner, the applicant will be notified and informed of any required corrective action in the next Office action. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Specification

5. The use of the trademark "Hastelloy" and "Inconel" has been noted in this application. It should be capitalized wherever it appears and be accompanied by the generic terminology.

Although the use of trademarks is permissible in patent applications, the proprietary nature of the marks should be respected and every effort made to prevent their use in any manner which might adversely affect their validity as trademarks.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

6. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

7. Claims 5-6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

8. Claims 5 and 6 recite the limitation "*the metal*" in lines 2-3 (three occurrences in claim 5) and in lines 6-8 (three occurrences in claim 6). There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

9. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

10. Claims 1-2 and 5-6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by the Japanese publication 2000-208153 (hereinafter referred to as the JP'153).

The present claims are geared toward a separator assembly wherein the disclosed inventive concept comprises the specific diffusion layer and separator being joined (welded).

As to claim 1:

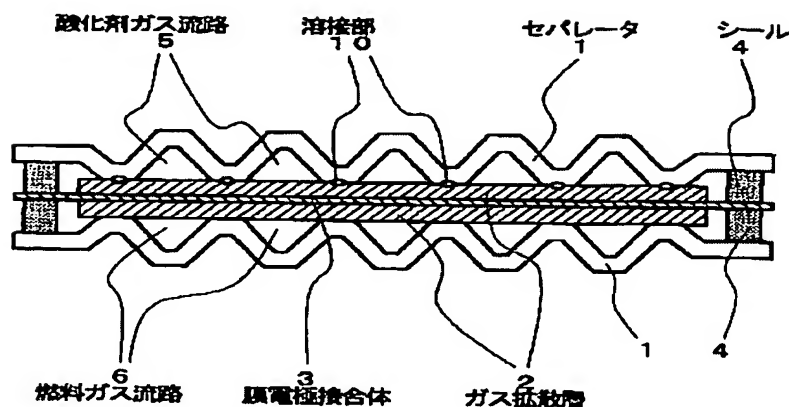
The JP'153 discloses a porous metallic gas diffusion layer for diffusing fuel cell reactants (ABSTRACT/P0007). The gas diffusion layer is made of stainless steel (ABSTRACT).

The JP'153 also discloses a metallic separator which is positioned adjacent to the gas diffusion layer (ABSTRACT/P0005).

Both the gas diffusion layer and the metallic separator are bonded by resistance welding at a welding part 10. *Thus, they are welded together.*

Figure 1 below illustrates the gas diffusion layer 2 and the separator 1 adjacent to each other; the gas flow channels 5 and 6; and the welding parts 10.

【図 1】

As to claim 2:

The JP'153 discloses resistance welding (ABSTRACT).

As to the method limitation, i.e. the laser welding, it is noted that a method limitation incorporated into a product claim does not patentably distinguish the product because what is given patentably consideration is the product itself and not the manner in which the product was made. Therefore, the patentability of a product is independent of how it was made.

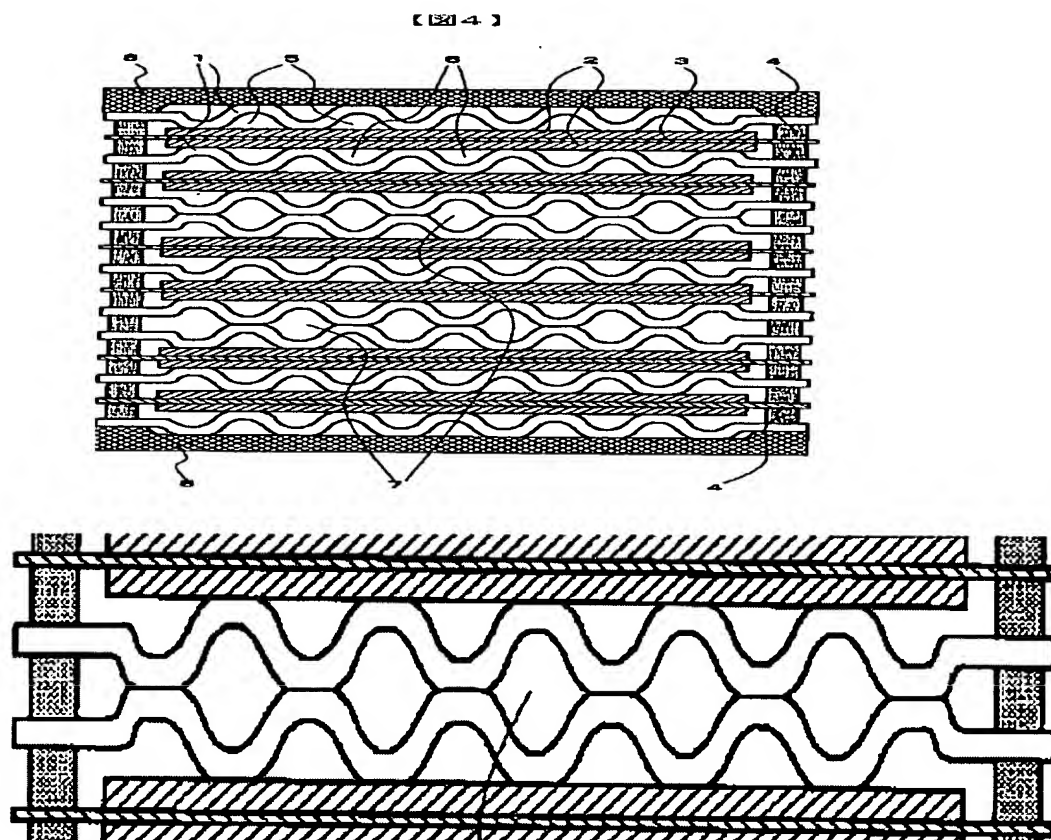
As for claim 5:

As shown above in **Figure 1**, the combination of the corrugated separators 1 and the welding parts 10 allows the formation of reactant passages 5 and 6 (See Figure 1).

As for claim 6:

Figure 4 below of the JP'153 illustrates the inclusion of separator layers forming cooling water passages 7. Note that such separator layers are joined together or bonded to form the cooling water passage structure. Enlarged portion of Figure 4 better illustrates this configuration.

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Thus, the present claim is anticipated.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

11. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

12. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

13. (*At least*) Claims 1-2 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Applicant's Admission of Prior Art (herein called the AAPA).

{On pages 1-2 of the present application} The AAPA discloses metal diffusion layers and metal separators wherein the separators are disposed outside of the metal diffusion layers (Page 1, lines 15-21). It is further disclosed that a unified separator assembly has been developed in which a gas diffusion layer and a separator are connected and unified (bonded) by using an adhesive or clips (Page 2, lines 3-5 and lines 18-25). *Thus, the AAPA readily envisions bonding or unifying a metallic gas diffusion layers and a metallic separator.*

Examiner's note: *It is noted that the instant claims are being construed as product-by-process claims and that the product itself does not depend on the process of making it.*

Accordingly, in a product-by-process claim, the patentability of a product does not depend on its

method of production. In that, it is further noted that the product in the instant claims is the same as or obvious over the product of the prior art.

Therefore, the claims are anticipated by the AAPA. However, if the claims are not anticipated the claims are obvious as it has been held similar products claimed in product-by-process limitations are obvious *In re Brown* 173 USPQ 685 and *In re Fessman* 180 USPQ 324 (Refer to MPEP 2113: Product-by-Process Claims).


Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Raymond Alejandro whose telephone number is (571) 272-1282. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday (8:00 am - 6:30 pm).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patrick J. Ryan can be reached on (571) 272-1292. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Raymond Alejandro
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1745


RAYMOND ALEJANDRO
PRIMARY EXAMINER